

Coates (B. H.)

ANNUAL ADDRESS

ON

THE EVENTS OF THE YEAR.

DELIVERED BY APPOINTMENT, FEBRUARY 22d, 1860, ACCORDING TO  
THE BY-LAWS OF THE

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

BY

BENJAMIN HORNOR COATES.

AT THE LEGAL CESSATION OF THE PRESIDENCY FOR THE PRECEDING YEAR.

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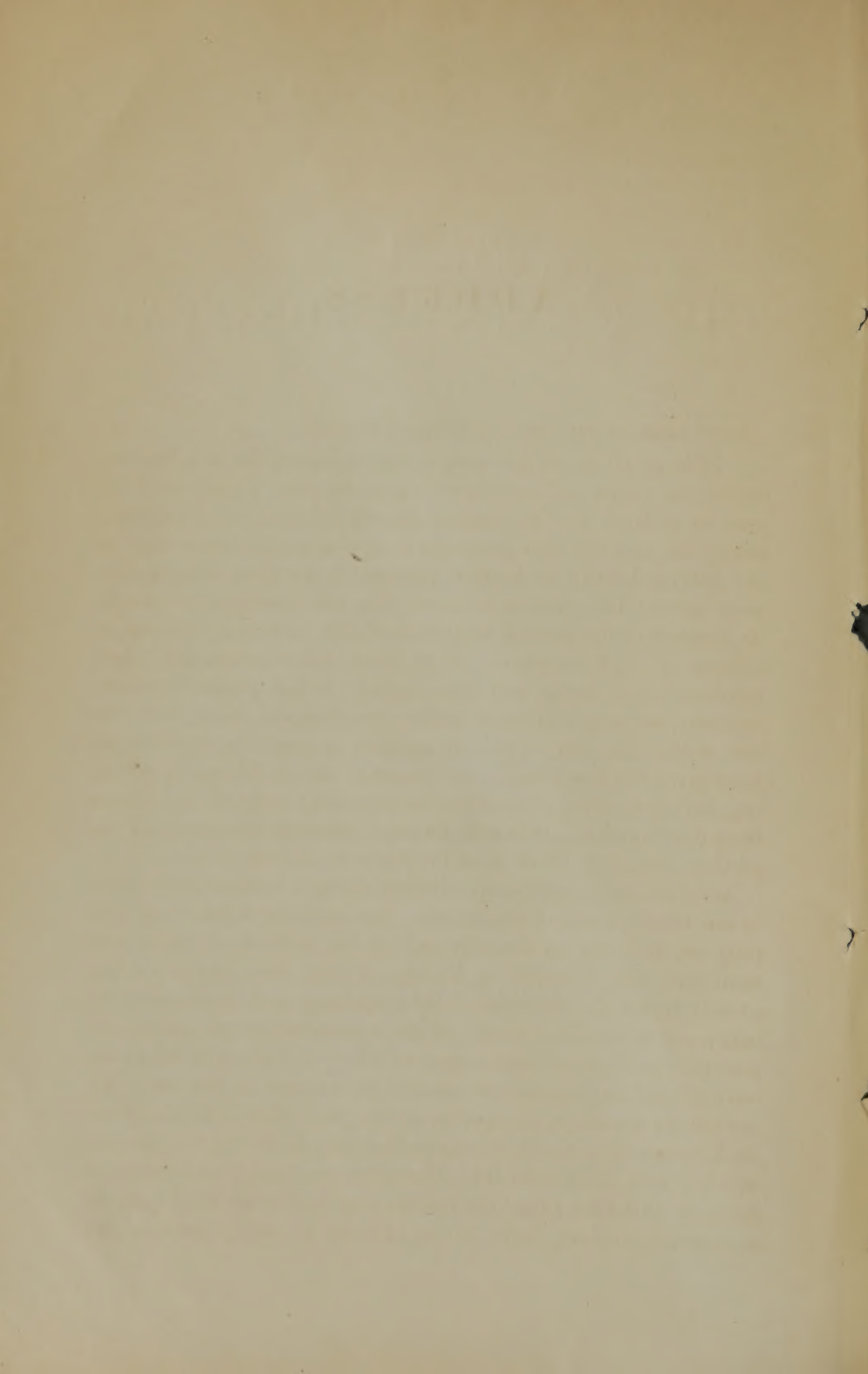
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## A D D R E S S .

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GENTLEMEN OF THE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY:

It is at all times not only a highly honorable task, but one calling for grave and serious reflection, for your President of the year to address you on leaving his official station. To demonstrate this, it is not now necessary to appeal to the importance of our responsibilities as medical persons, or to those arising from association. The present audience does not require to be taught its elementary obligations, as a mass of men, of men of business, of citizens or of philosophers. They know, will execute, and "dare maintain" their duties and their rights. In the present instance, however, we have additional motives for care and labor, from the loss, within the year, of a large number of members, to whom we have given the best proof in our power of our confidence, by selecting, during a period of considerable duration, nearly all our officers from their number. It is with unusually earnest feelings of responsibility, then, that I now have the honor to address you.

The first, and a sufficiently obvious, thought that naturally arises in our minds, is one of condolence. Instituted for a great and wise purpose, and one particularly calling for unanimous action and sentiment, the Philadelphia County Medical Society cannot but greatly regret the cessation of the attendance and assistance of so many and so qualified men. When a member resigns his connection with us from a desire to pursue a line of conduct to which we have refused our consent, we can feel less sadness for the loss. We are a body associated for specific action; and when individuals are no longer willing to co operate in that action, we are the less dissatisfied with their removal. But when gentlemen who entertain precisely the same principles and feelings with ourselves in regard to medical conduct, leave us, on motives avowedly personal, we



cannot escape a deeper sorrow. The self-respect of the Society will not permit it to make advances to them; but we may, as individuals, entertain the hope that they may again be united to us; or, if this be not within coming events, at least that the total similarity of motives that exists between them and us may tend, for all useful purposes, to consolidated and harmonious action.

Next, in order of time, and perhaps first in importance, appears to the officer who now enjoys the distinction of addressing you, to be the entire and exemplary order and adherence to the proprieties of life, which have so eminently prevailed among us during the year. Scarcely in a single instance, since the first of our numerous meetings during the twelve months, has one harsh, irritable, or disrespectful expression towards an individual, or one mark of want of deference for the body been exhibited among us. And where such an occurrence might have been imagined, the Society has known how to consult its own dignity, without severity of any kind towards the party in question. From general experience, or that of preceding years, such a result was not to be expected. It is not in the usual course of things that a general body, representing the whole medical profession, can hold its meetings without sometimes incurring vehement, and occasionally stormy struggles. The life of physicians is a hard one. Their primary studies and habitual pursuits tend to the same exaltation of nervous sensibility which has so proverbially given to the poet, the painter, and other cultivators of the finer senses, the opprobrium of "irritable genus." City practitioners are deprived of the tonicity engendered by habitual riding and mountain air. Trained by profession to philanthropy, they are thrown upon worse than the hardships of trade. Insulated from the rest of mankind by the mode of spending their hours, educated differently, having, in large numbers, chosen their profession from the very motive of a fixed dislike to the ordinary modes of acquiring money, a dislike which frequently arises from an apprehension of moral meanness supposed to be mixed with them, hated for a superiority in real worth, which even their enemies and those of the community feel, they are the constant mark of small fraud and petty or even deeper malice from without. At the same time, within the profession, each practitioner is aware of the exertions and sacrifices which he has himself made, while he cannot in reason be supposed as well acquainted with those of another; and hence the result, so natural to man, of adding to his own

claims and setting too light an estimate upon those of his competitor. How is it possible, in such a situation, to avoid the production of jealousy?

These agencies are considered by moralists to be deep in the nature of man. They are deep in the circumstances and condition of physicians. Hence the common meanness and the implication of moral corruption by which, when extra-professional men attempt to show, as they would have it believed, their friendship for one physician, they so frequently, instead of being useful to him, attempt to undermine his unoffending neighbor.

How great is the necessity, then, of having a body in which we can meet under circumstances of mutual respect and confidence! in which each man's rights are secured, and the dignity which truly belongs to the profession is maintained! A physician is a gentleman and a scholar. If he be not, he is not a physician. We are bound to treat each other in accordance with this; and if, as some have alleged, the avarice or ambition of individuals has deceived us in the days of our youth, and admitted a portion of us to the profession, unaware of some of our rights and duties, the character of a medical society admits of but little in the way of punishment. The habitual sway of public opinion, the natural inclination to imitate honorable examples, the manly expression of opinion by individuals, these are the means on which the preservation of correct habits almost exclusively depends. If more be needed, there is little else provided than the avoidance of the offending party, or, if really required, reprimand or expulsion by the Society. We are either entitled to all the consideration due to gentlemen, or we are unfit to be members of the Philadelphia County Medical Society. The respect we pay to our brethren enhances that conceded to ourselves; and the continued habit of mutual deference and kindness gradually improves the character of every individual in the body.

Another subject of gratulation appears to the present speaker to be the success of our lectures and discussions. Members will recollect an attempt, a little before the great commercial ruin of 1857, at establishing medical lectures, with an honorable compensation, on branches not usually taught in our colleges. This fell through in consequence of the distresses of the times. It is a question not easy to be settled what would have been the result had the Society, instead of making the attempt at a moment so near the general destruction of industry, set the labor in motion at



the time when it was first proposed, or when it was included among the recommendations of the committee on improved methods of business. Recognizing the obvious impracticability of the attempt, at the moment when decisive action on it was to commence, the Society wisely abandoned it; but we can justly claim, as a partial but valuable compensation, the elaborate lectures, with the discussions on them, which have taken place during the present winter. Certainly it has been well served by its committee and its lecturers. A selection has been made of subjects strongly invoking the attention of practical men; they have been handled by able and well instructed persons, and discussed with reference less to the display of learning, science, or oratory, than to positive usefulness in the discharge of daily duty among our population.

It may be said that two great and general objects are in view in the establishment of scientific bodies. One of these is inculcation, diffusion, and familiarizing of the science which belongs to the age. This labor contemplates immediate usefulness among existing fellow beings; and, as a portion of its rewards, may be justly demanded, an honorable assurance of the means of support, and the comfort and influence which are the proper results of industry. The other is an attempt to increase the same science ourselves, by original observations and reflections, and by the record of remarkable facts. This hopes for the guerdon of foreign and domestic praise, and perhaps of fame. Of these the second is by far the higher in worldly rank, and the more dazzling in the brilliancy of the prizes at which it aims; but it cannot be denied that the first is by far the more important in its immediate services to mankind, and the more imperative as a preparation of individuals for effective duty. It is a thankless and almost disreputable task for one having the honor to address a scientific association to discourage efforts in search of an honorable and enduring posthumous fame by adding to the mass of human knowledge. Yet a difficult task is best executed when it is done with due reflection on the attendant circumstances; and we will ask the liberty to make a few suggestions. In order to add usefully to the amount of what is now known by the human species, and extend the victory of the posterity of Adam over the earth and the fulness thereof, it is laboring at the risk of the loss of our time if we have not previously made ourselves well acquainted with the knowledge which exists. Instances of this, in which valuable talents, assiduous labor, and conscientious

and honorable views have run to waste, are far from infrequent in the United States, and have given much pain to real well-wishers of the parties, and persons earnestly taking pleasure in the service of mankind. Not to know the really vast extent of human labor and knowledge, even in a single point, is an occurrence which has often been the fate of men of the highest natural and of many acquired qualifications. To endeavor to secure a niche in the temple of posthumous fame, is a task possessing the strongest attractions for every age. It wins the warmest exertions and self-devotion of youth; and is rarely forsaken by age, but from an idea, whether founded on presumed inability or on the pressure of more urgent duties, of the impossibility of its performance.

Are these thy views? Proceed, illustrious youth,  
 And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth;  
 Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat  
 Till captive science yield her last retreat;  
 Should reason guide thee with unclouded ray,  
 And pour on misty doubt resistless day;  
 Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,  
 Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;  
 Should tempting novelty thy cell refrain,  
 And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;  
 Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,  
 Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart;  
 Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,  
 Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade,  
 Yet hope not life from griefs or dangers free,  
 Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee.

In the city of Philadelphia there now exist generous and abundant means for making known any real accession to science. The County Medical Society has not undertaken to add to these, but has judiciously selected a task for which less provision has been made—that of collecting from competent individuals, and discussing, the science of the age as it actually exists and is applicable to the practice of the art of healing. While others have won the highest honors by researches in recondite science, or descriptions of natural objects, our therapeutic evenings have sent us home with easier minds, clearer judgments, opinions made up on solid grounds, ambiguities distinctly stated and defined, and a consciousness of being better advisers to our fellow-citizens in cases of disease and death. We are far indeed from having any cause to regret the selection of subjects for our evening considerations. The true



basis of dignity in man is conceded by moralists to be the discharge of duty; and if we have not been employed in the augmentation of science, let us congratulate ourselves on having assisted to render it more popular and to apply it to purposes of utility.

With the value of scientific research, and its just claims to the highest praise, it is not necessary to impress American physicians. While we believe that we have done justice to our own responsibility, let us not forget the honorable bodies which have been engaged in the collateral labor. While the Pathological Society has devoted itself more to dissection, and the Biological Department of the Academy of Natural Sciences more to chemistry, the microscope, and toxicology, both of them have been making diligent use of the best refinements of the age and the most recent intelligence. They have contributed largely to the comparison of the diseases of America with those of the elder hemisphere, as regards similarity and distinction; and they have recorded the new facts which will, at a future day, find their proper places in the great building of science, which employs the labor of all countries and all ages. It is not one of the weakest grounds for self-gratulation among American physicians to know that those collateral studies which have acquired an established fame for our country have, almost all of them, been performed by members of our profession; and even that naturalists, already of high distinction, and who had no intention to practise medicine, have been desirous of acquiring the character of medical graduation.

If such be the recognition which acknowledged merit and services have extorted for the honorable claims of men engaged in the art of healing, how hard is it that these should be interfered with by impostors! How much harder that the public should patronize such! Hard as the treatment is, it were better to consider it with a dispassionate analysis than to consume our time with useless repining at even the most glaring injustice. What, then, is the cause of this strange disposition to prefer men of inferior acquirements and morality to the best and the ablest? Why is it that, in such large numbers, the educated and the uneducated seem so desirous of obtruding themselves, as practitioners or judges, into the medical character?

*Fingunt se medicos omnes; idiota, sacerdos,  
Judeus, monachus, histrio, rasor, anus.*

All pretend that they are physicians; bumpkin, priest, jew, monk, player, barber, old lady.



Can we not, perhaps, find the explanation of the wonder in the considerations of jealousy, self-appreciation, imperfect knowledge of others, and the hardships of general competitive life? Men find it easier, in the intervals of contemplating their own disappointments, to set a higher estimate upon the apparent good fortune of others, and a lower one upon their merits, than to brace their own minds to fresh developments of self-control, industry and patience, for their own pursuits. To this is added, in many instances, the influence of familiarity.

The members of our clerical bodies are called upon for much patient exertion and habitual sacrifice; perhaps generally so; they meet in the sick-room with medical men; they sometimes detect the real weaknesses of our body; more frequently, they are struck with the earnest and impassioned leaning upon the support of the physician, which is generated by the intensity of the love of life. Called in habitually at the moment of death, they grow to think, like some of our pathological anatomists, that that which they uniformly see, uniformly occurs, and that, as mortal cases are picked out for their contemplation, mortality is the rule, and recovery is the exception. The anatomist is apt to fancy the newly discovered change of texture in the corpse, incurable; the clergyman, that the medication which did not cure the cases he sees, cannot cure. Not weighing adequately the physician's undeniable duty to support hope in the dying, by all honest means, and feeling the common propensity to set too low an estimate upon the moral self-devotion of one whom they have begun to fancy a competitor, they imagine him guilty of flattery.

Can we not discover a remedy for this state of things; or are we to content ourselves with speculating upon it as an irremediable disease, curious as a subject of natural history, but incapable of amelioration? The proper resource seems to be familiarity with the men. We seldom bring degrading imputations against our intimates. Let us occupy our proper space as members of the learned community; and then try whether the mantle of religion will cover this meddling and mischievous intrusion.

Some of those individuals placed in charge of institutions are among the next offenders. Elected to the administration of large establishments and large funds, and called upon to vote upon the merits of physicians; accustomed to see family influence, and that of business and pecuniary connections, brought to bear upon the

careers opened to members of the profession; they are liable to fancy the knowledge and skill of him whom they have chosen as belonging to themselves, and to imagine that, where they have procured labor for a vote, they can themselves perform the duty of which they have judged.

Why building contractors and other large employing mechanics should violate the sound principles of trade, by which they live, and which teach the division of labor, and the propriety of never interfering with deputed responsibilities, seems to be a problem difficult to solve. We can answer by imputing it to displeasure at the existence of a source of respect which they do not possess, and to the common inclination of mankind to deny the reality of merits of which they do not partake. Something, too, is due to the habit of contemplating money as the ruler of all passions and all industry: an estimate, alas, how erroneous! Besides this, their position in the management of a large concern gives them a feeling of formal and elevated authority over those whom they employ; while the labors of the physician are of another character. He is led into household intimacies with the laboring poor. It is not only necessary for him to know their little matters of domestic delicacy, but even to inquire into them; the employer, then, finding the medical man the associate of those over whom he has control, by a natural result, feels as if he really possessed an authority in the case, and it is attempted to subject the man of refined and extended studies to an assumption of superiority. The situation of printers, too, has in it one point of analogy to that of the directors of medical institutions. Accustomed, in their profession, to see authors struggling with pecuniary difficulties, so frequently the result of want of all acquaintance with the necessary modes of providing against them, printers are apt to include literary physicians with them, and to view others, if not imagined to be in the receipt of large funds, certainly not as above the same classification. Again, the corrector of proof-sheets is one of their own subordinates, and receives a small salary from them; and the author, anxious for the just impression which his work is to produce upon his future reader, and finding it needful clearly to satisfy the intelligence of the corrector, tends, in the eyes of the master of the establishment, to be felt as a companion for his inferiors, and, as a consequence, below him as the proprietor of the place.

Two classes of men, as I have found them, have appeared exempt

from this very prevailing sin. I have rarely, if ever, found a lawyer, or a Roman Catholic priest, exhibit a disposition either to meddle with the practice of medicine, or to endeavor, by hints or an attempted tone of manner, to degrade the medical profession. Learned themselves, they know the value of learning; and they also know the proneness of many to endeavor to depress it. They see nothing to be gained, either to themselves or the public, from endeavoring to throw difficulties in the way of men engaged in laborious and scrupulous efforts; nor do they fancy that they can elevate their own level by depressing that of those who rest upon a different foundation.

Of quacks and sellers of patent medicines, we need have little to say. The basis of the objections which physicians entertain towards them are well known, and have been often discussed. But what are we to say of the willingness of society to patronize these in preference to really educated men? The most extensive injustice is committed by those who favor these individuals, by professing to class the medical profession among those which are responsible to rules of trade. A college is to be protected by the community, not because its professors are learned, skilful and conscientious, but because it attracts students, and induces them to spend large sums of money in the city. A new college is to be created, and allowed to make its course less complete and shorter, in the face of a well known need for longer extension and further completion, because it will attract more students and more expenditure. Laborious young men, who attempt branches omitted by others, are allowed to suffer for want of support, and, in some instances, to ruin their health and shorten their lives, because the established circle of studies is expensive, and to add to the required amount of time and money would drive students and expenditure away. We have seen the removal of constipation by shampooing the arch of the colon, which the practitioner knew no better than to mistake for the stomach, rewarded with large fees and a rapid accumulation of fortune, while the qualified practitioner was stinted and delayed in his means of needful support, and sometimes left without them. Red pepper and violent sweating were erected into a science, and the same honors paid to the hundred millionth part of nothing in a pill, with a Latin name, rather than assist to support a neighbor's honorable son, who employed moderate amounts, and known mate-



rials. At one time, anything like the use of knowledge not generally possessed, no matter how plain a matter of fact, was stigmatized as "theory," and made an excuse for depriving a physician of his support. At another, the most determined opposition is made to the appointment of physicians to boards created for medical services, and powerful individuals are heard to declare that they never will consent to their introduction to such bodies, on account, we believe, of the same "theories." At another time, novelty rules the age, and the opportunity of becoming acquainted with some of the branches before omitted, backed by a few unusual words, is held to be such a revolution as utterly to nullify the value of all other science, and all the largest and most elaborate experience. In one period he who believes that the condition of the human blood is a part of the history of disease which ought to be studied, is openly denounced as an ignoramus, or a fool; at another, he is the large and enlightened mind, who comprehends the newly-created revelation of medicine, before whom all others are to be contemptuously discarded, and all other physie than his "thrown to the dogs!" At one moment, the laborious and learned chemists and botanists who criticize Pharmacopœias and imported drugs, receive, perhaps, due praise, but no reward; at another, it is attempted to raise the secret compound that, by dint of advertising, has got possession of the market, to the dignity of an established medicine, freed from the reproach of quackery.

Through all this extraordinary mass of occurrences, so extravagant and so inconsistent one with another, that it is difficult to believe that they have all really occurred within a limited term of years, in the same city, there runs one mark of uniformity. They arise from various impulses; but they all profess to be justified by the principle of holding medicine to be governed by the laws of trade. Nearly all these vagaries are professed to be supported on the alleged principles of fair and free competition. No matter though the one course be a moral duty of the highest class, and the other a mercenary interest; though the first be a pains-taking and self-sacrificing effort to do right, and the other a well-known fraud; these things, so contrary in every other example, must, in the case of physicians, be placed on equal terms. The falseness of such a test, like some mathematical propositions, is really incapable of being proved, for the very reason that it is self-evident. The ideas

of our countrymen upon the subject of liberty, have led them to commit these responsibilities to persons incompetent to judge of them; to individuals not educated to the discharge of such duties. As lawyers complain that the institution of juries, invented for the protection of liberty against tyrants, is made to produce and sanction the grossest injustice, so are the phrases free trade, open competition, and public interest, made to authorize acts which I need not qualify, so glaring are their injustice and absurdity when they are barely enumerated.

From the contemplation of these evils naturally arises the question, how are we to guard against all this? If the legislatures of our country refuse protection to well-doing, or refer us to partial and necessarily unjust judges, does it follow that we are to resign ourselves to the current of corruption without an effort, and suffer the occupation of so many heroes, philosophers and saints, to subside to the level of the lowest and most abandoned class of our politicians?

Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?  
 Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
 Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?  
 Must no dislike alarm? no wishes rise?  
 No cries invoke the mercies of the skies?

As the profession, then, is deprived of the advantages bestowed, in most European nations, by government provision, regulation and protection, the American Medical Association and its branches have thought it the proper resource that it should create an organization of its own and govern itself. It is by virtue of that determination that we are now assembled. Organizations for self-government are familiar in the country; and, strange to say, this attempt to obviate popular injustice and define the fitting claimants to the mantle of the wise and good of former ages, does not seem to be unpopular. It is probably viewed as a matter of course. So many instances exist of similar associations within the body politic, that we are perhaps protected by the interests of others who would feel themselves endangered by an assault upon our right to do so; and a public outcry, so easily raised against anything, seems not to meet with patronage when aimed at this. It is from our own divisions that the difficulty arises. It is within our own numbers that the play of human passions takes place, in which false

pretension, backed by self-conceit, claims to place itself upon an equality with a stricter morality and a more conscientious discharge of duty. It is among ourselves that the power which ought to depend upon thorough preparation and a high-principled industry, is sought from political party, or, with hardly less meanness, from the influence of wealth.

Still, however, there remains sufficient inducement for us to persevere in the track of self-government. Not only is association the only means of improvement left to us; but it is one of very considerable power. That which is strong in the service of false pretension and corruption, is also efficient for sincerity and uprightness. We are not to despond of Divine justice. There are just men left in our Sodoms; and, although virtue is not to be triumphant, the controlling power "will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish," nor shall he "ever be removed" out of the land. There is such a control over the mind of men in the real truth, that fraudulent combinations cannot, in general, be conducted without a pretence of it. It would really seem that, other than veracity and integrity, there is little on which a permanent union can be formed. For this reason is it, perhaps, that imposture so uniformly falls before the combined power of truth and perseverance; the "*justum et tenacem propositi*." The force of error is temporary; that of truth, eternal. It is the character at once correct and steady, that becomes established in public opinion. The parasitic insect consumes the tree; wolves devour the flock; but if the power that produces the unoffending were not greater than that which maintains the plunderer, devourers and devoured would disappear in a common destruction. The upright man has the support of Providence, even in externals; and, in addition, enjoys the privilege of an unrepublishing conscience. "Conscience!" cries the archbishop, in the Italian apologue, "His Eminence, my Lord Cardinal, can keep a conscience. He is rich. But, for my part, I cannot afford such an expensive luxury."

By a firm and persevering union, based on integrity, we obtain that continued support which arises from a consciousness of upright principles in ourselves and confidence in those of others. By such a combination, the best front is presented to the ills of life, and the best justice done to a course of equitable conduct. I am proud to find the right of our profession to cite the wisdom of a high antiquity maintained by gentlemen, members of this body,



who have not been ashamed or afraid, in the proper place, to quote Greek.

ομοφροσύνην ὀπάσειαν  
 Ἐσθλὴν' ὃ μὲν γὰρ τῷ γε κρεῖσσον καὶ ἀρειον—  
 πύλλ' ἄλγεια δυσμενέεσσι,  
 Χάρμαϊα δ' εὐμενέησι· μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αἰῶι.

The gods, when they supremely bless, bestow  
 Firm union on their favorites below.  
 Then envy grieves, with inly pining hate,  
 The good exult, and heav'n is in our state.

The attempt to achieve such union calls for a high and steady respect for ourselves and for our friends and fellow laborers. It calls for a religious abstinence from the arts and practices of those called politicians. He who intentionally undermines his innocent neighbor is never fit for a member of a profession so elevated.

Or if no basis bear my rising name  
 But the fall'n ruins of another's fame,  
 Then teach me, heav'n, to scorn the guilty bays;  
 Drive from my heart that wretched lust of praise;  
 Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown;  
 Grant me an honest fame, or grant me none.

The unity of feeling, and the self-government which we have described, of necessity produce what has so commonly been charged against the profession among the populace, a character of exclusiveness. How can we govern, with no other compulsion than the common opinion of our fellows, if we receive men among us who are unwilling to submit to our decisions, or who are unable, from want of preparation, to execute the labor we deem duty to require? The disobedient, or the ignorant or imperfectly informed, cannot be proper members of such a body. To prove this, it has been common to appeal to the fact that such has, in all ages, been found to be the necessity of the case. This consideration, however, is not requisite, the thing being evident to common apprehension. It may be, in fact, rather the opposite to a recommendation. The vanity of the present age and race of men is strongly inclined, in the pride of its new discoveries and vast increase of power, to hold all former science as *ipso facto* superseded, and all antiquity as a thing to be either studiously reversed in its decisions, or smiled at for imbecility as that of a child. We will, therefore, appeal only to the experience of the present age;

and, notwithstanding it was really found true in Greece and Egypt, even yet believe it because it is now so in America.

The real arguments in favor of preserving the old, corporate form of the medical profession, which are applicable in the case, are not those of a mere science. Neither are those such, which belong to a common mechanic art. If medicine were only a science, it would be better that it were open to all. Every one who chose would then enter into competition; and the unqualified would be driven from the field by censure or ridicule; while the competent only would continue to occupy the public attention. According to habits of thinking which prevail in America, the same would be the case in regard to the mechanic arts. Your annual address will not be occupied with the discussion whether the moral impropriety of mendacious pretensions to skill and integrity be not the same in contracts for mechanical work as in other instances; and whether the prevention of such offences be not more the duty of a public spirited government, than a rare, remote, and uncertain provision for their punishment. The performance of the duties of a physician is, in general, of a responsibility more weighty and more moral in its character. With the exception of certain cases which occur in large engineering, such as the fall of manufactories, railroad collisions, the loss of shipping, &c.—omitting these instances, the offences of neglect and ignorance charged on mechanical contracts chiefly relate to the loss of sums of pecuniary value, often moderate in amount. Not so, however, is the task of preserving life and health. To use the language of Satan, “all that a man hath will he give for his life.” The retention of life and enjoyment of our faculties and functions, requires not the testimony of the demon to confirm its attractions for the children of men; it is by all nations considered preferable to all other blessings, even to what is called “the almighty dollar;” and religion, as commonly viewed, enhances the preference. Medical skill must be taken in the concrete, with all its applications and concomitants. Instead of mere abstractions of the mind, we have to deal with the most important of practical arts. Instead of the loss of a little money, the question is that of earthly existence, of pain and weakness, of time to provide for families, or to prepare the soul for another world. Proportionate is the difficulty and ambiguity of the task. Instead of abstract mathematical certainty, or the qualities of brute matter, we have to act in the midst of doubt, intricacy,

human chances, deceptive appearances, and deceptive information, and testimony extorted from incapacity, prejudice, self-sufficiency, ignorance, carelessness, and disqualification to observe. How often and how emphatically do we have to return to the first lesson in medicine, the maxim of the Coan philosopher! We cannot repeat it too often to ourselves and our fellow citizens. "Art is long; life is short; the necessity of deciding urgent; experiment dangerous;\* and judgment difficult. And not only is it necessary that the physician should be prepared, and do what is required, but the sick man himself, and the persons present, and those outside." Is this a task to be lightly undertaken? a responsibility to be left to rest on the head of every claimant? a proper employment for a class of men, into which are thrust individuals from without, at the discretion of constituents only enlightened by the art of accumulating money, or by the collateral intelligence of law or divinity?

Those of our European brethren who have succeeded in maintaining a higher protection for our profession, deserve not only our warmest thanks, but our careful study. Our institutions and habits are avowedly copied after those of the physicians of London;

\* In thus deviating from the common English construction of a passage so celebrated as the first aphorism of Hippocrates, it may be necessary to append an explanation. This rendering of ἡ πείρα σφαλερὴ, is the construction of Heurnius; Comment. Aphorism. p. 20; also in his version; in which, instead of "experientia fallax," he gives us "empirica periclitatio periculosa;" awkward Latin, but very important practical sense. The same inference, however, might be drawn from the Lexicon (Liddell and Scott), in which both the original and habitual meaning of πείρα is given as experiment or attempt, and the word rarely, and only by construction, is held to mean experience. Σφαλερὴ, too, does not essentially mean deceitful, but dangerous; the elementary idea being that of tripping or overturning; and the word being cognate to the German and English word "fall." Is it not more likely that Hippocrates meant rather to state a real danger, and give a judicious and useful caution to the practitioner, than merely to shake his confidence in his profession, lower it in his eyes and those of the public, and support the vulgar defamation of it? If experience be deceitful, by what shall we judge of truth in practice?

After making the above criticism, and on the same day, a somewhat odd, but very tragical illustration of it occurred in one of the newspapers.

"A woman residing near the village of Hunt's Hollow, Lexington County, hung herself, a few days since, under rather peculiar circumstances. She had been an attentive peruser of all newspaper information relative to the execution of John Brown; and her mind had become so far infatuated thereby as to lead her to experiment for the purpose of ascertaining the kind of physical suffering attendant on hanging. Her experiment, however, resulted fatally."—*Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Saturday, February 11, 1860.



from whom, however, like the Courtenay family from the emperors of Constantinople, if we have really descended, it may be feared that, as regards the treatment we undergo, we have descended very far. Of the status of those who are popularly known as the physicians of that metropolis, a very lively and correct judgment can be formed from Dr. Wood's Introductory Lectures and Addresses, pages 279 and 280. It is not unfamiliar to those who have resided in England, who have had frequent intercourse with English people, or who are in the habit of reading descriptions of English society and manners.

To comfort, however, those among us on whom this series of depressing considerations may produce an undue effect, we will quote a testimony of a different kind. In 1832, the Prince Maximilian de Wied, the celebrated naturalist, states that he received no attentions in Philadelphia, "the physicians, who were the principal persons of the place, being all occupied with the cholera."

We have, it is believed, a right to claim the support of the Roman Catholic and perhaps the Greek churches, which recognize the Apocrypha as canonical, and that of the Episcopal body, which recommends them as reading profitable for instruction, in making another quotation. The language of the son of Sirach is as follows. "Honor a physician with the honor due unto him, for the uses which ye may have of him; for the Lord hath created him. For of the Most High cometh healing; and he shall receive honor of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head; and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them. . . . And He hath given men skill, that he might be honored in his marvellous works." Ecclesiasticus, xxxviii. 1 . . . 4 and 6. Such doctrine was taught to the chosen people, when, in the vast city of Alexandria, their revelations came in contact with the power of the Ptolemies, the solemn mysteries of Egypt, and the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato.

The present is perhaps the proper place to speak of a means of sustaining the respectability of the profession, from which much, at times, has been expected; we mean the institution of partly secret societies. It would ill become a member of the old Kappa Lambda Society, and an editor of the *North American Journal*, to speak aught in opposition to such an organization. The recollections connected with the now extinct Philadelphia branch, and with

the laborious days and nights of editorship, are among the dearest and proudest in the life of the present speaker. Yet it may, perhaps, be not improper, on the score of expediency, to say a word or two on the subject.

A partially secret society, like other societies, cannot be carried on without labor; and this labor is not exactly capable of being made up for by increased exertion. There is also a tendency, from the difference of natural genius, for some members to occupy themselves more with business details and the exercise of influence, while others perform more of the scientific toil. The total effect is thus increased, and the institution is probably rendered more prosperous; but the effect upon the fortunes of the individuals engaged in it is very different. In a mercenary community, the disposition of the vulgar to injure and disparage those who acquire literary or scientific reputation without a proportionate pecuniary provision, comes naturally into play. It is well known, too, that some diversity of opinion exists among our moralists in regard to the relation which the pledges of such bodies bear to the laws.

There may sometimes be a danger that the more delicate consciences, and such as are in the habit of being more severe in judging themselves, may be placed in painful positions by the fact of having hampered themselves with an oath or promise, made in full confidence in the probity of their mates, while, at a subsequent period, some decision may be had by a majority of the body, to which the first mentioned may be held bound, although, in the exercise of their independent judgment, they would not have gone so far. Again, from the great familiarity of our countrymen with masonic forms it is difficult to see what assurance the members of a society so organized can ever have, that higher grades may not be privately formed among the members, bound by obligations entirely separate, joining in the formation of majorities in the inferior meetings, and authorizing proceedings in which the members of the lower degree may be unwilling, or unable from moral scruples, to unite.

One of the most persevering attacks made upon so unoffending a body as that composed of the men who endeavor to benefit the sick, has been a complaint of their not meeting those whom they consider as inferior practitioners, in consultation. On this score they are taxed with selfishness and a disposition to monopolize; and those whose consciences and convenience induce them to act

otherwise, praised for an honorable liberality. It has been alleged as a censure, that physicians prevent those with whom they thus refuse to communicate from becoming better practitioners; and that they thus do harm. To this we reply that these practitioners are intruded among us by the plans of men whose very object in making access to the medical character more easy, and admitting new classes to it, is in direct opposition to what we have become, by long and sad experience, convinced is most wanted by the American community—an extensive prolongation and improvement of its course of studies. The American Medical Convention and Association have recognized this necessity, and endeavored, as far as practicable, to provide for it.

There are censures that, to impartial judges, are unquestionably and glaringly just, and that yet startle and excite surprise when they are stated to the offenders in words different from those in which they have been in the habit of expressing them. Though, when I join with others to oppose a different party, I justify to my own conscience the acts I am committing, to the apprehension of my opponents it appears that I am unhesitatingly doing a glaring wrong. In return, if I ever come to hear this estimate of my efforts, I feel shocked, and boldly assume that the charge is imaginary or false, and that I am well known to be incapable of such conduct. The truth is that these attempts to increase the access to the medical ranks are intrusions by the agency of persons totally unqualified for judging of the task. When clergymen, lawyers, teachers, merchants, and manufacturers set up new medical schools in opposition to the known judgment of physicians, they are doing that of which they are not proper judges; and in this respect are no more likely to benefit the community than in any other case of unwarrantable interference. In schools of this kind there is an intrinsic impropriety. It is voted that there should be women practitioners. Instead of a commission of medical men to arrange a mode in which the few who may be wanted shall be prepared for their labors, a new school is created, having for its administrators a selection of gentlemen possessing certainly no peculiar knowledge of the subject on which they are about to legislate. The graduates are to start at once in avowed competition with the most accomplished physicians; all the conditions and consequences of a college are expected, and we are blamed if we do not consult with them. It is not in regard to the wonders of physiology that the pith and



bearing of the enterprise are to be most exemplified, but in the care of sickness, and the effective discharge of active duties.

It cannot certainly be alleged that there is any intrinsic reason why women should not perform a part of the toils of the art of healing. There are also, no doubt, three or four brilliant instances in the world of women who have justly attained high distinction in medicine. It is, however, equally true that these celebrated individuals have undeniably an equal degree of preparation and fitness; and it is certainly also true that they achieved this by means of establishments of high character. It was not by an association of men of other professions, to create a new institution which should rival the great schools of Paris, Berlin, or Vienna.

The Philadelphia County Medical Society has forbidden its members to consult with the graduates of a recent school; and for one of the resignations lately offered to it, this has, in private, been assigned as a cause. The present speaker, however instructed to address you by the laws of the Society, might here shelter himself under his obedience to a recorded vote of the body. He feels it, however, more manly, and more worthy of a member of a professional body, while treating on the subject, and on a proper occasion, to express his real opinion. Though not present at the discussion, and not aware that it was to be considered, an opinion on the same point in another body having been refused, he has no hesitation in pronouncing his agreement in the belief which he presumes actuated the Society in this decision. It is not proved that a body formed in the manner we have described, has furnished graduates adapted to fill up, to the public advantage, the vacuity alleged to exist. The presumption is, *primâ facie*, against them. And where is the great hospital in which they have made original observations for themselves? Our youth are laboriously doing what a more just and honorable system of government would have enabled our aged men to perform; exploring nature, sick and healthy, tangible and microscopic, scientifically and curatively, to the solid augmentation of medical knowledge. It is not necessary to question the ability of our sisters to do this thing; but where is the arena?

It may be replied that the want of this facility is hard; and that it is heroic to endeavor to remove it. Probably it is so; but the thing exists; and, if fellow-feeling be demanded, we too have to endure hardships, such as have been enumerated in this address.

Among the recent occurrences which have attracted the public

attention, is one which has produced, as so many inappropriate ones do, a fresh attack upon the medical profession. It might otherwise not be necessary to revive the subject before a medical body. In the course of an investigation into an unhappy event at an apothecary's establishment, one of the earliest resources was to examine the prescription of a physician, to find whether the means could not be found to throw a part or the whole of the blame on him. He was acquitted; both by the legal inquisition and by public opinion. One would think physicians were suspected individuals, under the superintendence of the police. One might fancy that they were a political party; as in that case, among our contenders for power, all rules of morality would appear to be abolished, and the flames of Tartarus adopted for the enginery, in default of the more imperfect sulphurs of Naples and Sicily. He was acquitted by public opinion; and the gates of hell could not prevail against him. If Jeshurun be representative of our apothecaries, he has certainly, in some instances, waxed fat and kicked. Occupying, first, the wholesale drug business, he has also largely partaken of the sale of toilet and fancy articles. In other cases, it may be, he tends a little to emaciation. The result is, as far as stands conspicuous to the public eye, the appearance of multitudinous establishments throughout the city, an army of young men, a college, with its offices and appurtenances, the accumulation of large fortunes, and an active share in the administration of diversified public institutions; while Jeshurun retains the title of an apothecary, and more or less prepares and supplies drugs. Is the scientific and life and death part of an apothecary's labors a thing so slight and limited, as to require the occupation of so small a portion of human existence, and to leave leisure for all these glories? Or has their profession embraced all the genius of the city? It has been found favorable to that sound economy which acts as an insurance in an adventurous commerce, and adds sensibly to the smaller accumulations of a safe one, to take young men, such as can be had for a very small salary. In some cases, the sons of Jeshurun give their genius a wider scope, study medicine and assume the cap of the doctor. In some they ascend to the pulpit or the gallery of the preacher.

Other apothecaries exist among us, not all from European schools, who confine their attention to dispensing drugs, discard the sale of other articles, and even refuse to sell patent and secret medicines.

These gentlemen can obtain higher prices for their preparations, and afford lower ones; receiving enough, it is to be hoped, to compensate them for the loss they undergo in relinquishing other commerce, and, in addition, to enable them to enjoy that luxurious conscience which was beyond the means of the Italian Archbishop.

Amid these considerations of trade, some rather odd demonstrations have been made towards the medical profession. It would never do that the power of capital should not be felt. Intellect was all very well in its place; so was conscientious duty; but capital was something solid. A few years since, a conference was held between committees of the College of Physicians and that of Pharmacy; the results of which were published in the form of recommendations. Among these was the allegation that "physicians ought" to do something there specified, implying censure. Very much obliged to you! How far will physicians comply with the demands, not recommendations, of a College of Medicine—no! of Pharmacy?—Some years since, I was shown the result of a prescription of mine, with one-half of the directions omitted. I demanded the reason. It was that "physicians ought to write their directions in a few words." "Why?" Because the printed papers in the hands of the apothecary, very neatly executed, allowed only sufficient room to write the words "Two, 3 times a day."—I directed a patient some doses of the mild precipitated black oxide of mercury, and instructed him to get it at an establishment at which I had left some which I had been obliged to prepare myself, and was using. The patient was acted upon violently; and with symptoms of an acrimonious purge. "Did you get this at C.D.'s?" "No, sir. I had a business understanding with Mr. E. F.;" naming a druggist of high standing. To E. F.'s I went; and was informed that they had a complaint to make against me. "What was it?" "Why, I had no business to send their old customers to another store." "Well, but I did not know that you had the black oxide. Was that what you gave him?" "No! we gave him the cineritious oxide;" (chloride of mercury and ammonia!)

Since the occurrence above alluded to, two distinct attempts have been made within my private knowledge, one of them by a particular friend, to establish that the proper resource in the case was to prohibit physicians from using the Latin language in writing their prescriptions; and I have since seen it recommended, with excessive bitterness and vulgarity, in a Sunday paper. The



reason assigned was, that by having them in English, the person who carried them to the apothecary would be able to read them, and thus correct mistakes. Very likely that he would correct more mistakes than he would make! To do this with sufficient precision to avoid calamitous consequences is, as you know, impossible. In the case so unhappily occurring, and so well known, in what degree is *Recipe Sulphatis Quiniæ grana quatuor*, more liable to mistakes than *Take of Sulphate of Quinia four grains*; or *Sulphat. Morph.* any more liable to be taken for quinia than *Sulphate of Morphia*? The blundering presumption that mistakes the progress of science for artificial secrecy, would, most probably, object to the substitution of quinia for quinine, and charge upon "doctors' Latin" what was, in reality, extended knowledge and increased accuracy in the chemists.

"Oh! But a similar regulation has been established by law in France!" Exactly; during the ante-Buonapartean revolution. But what share has the attempt to embrace all science within the French language in the now acknowledged sensible decline of their vast mass of industry, learning, and genius behind the science of the Germans? Has the imposition of fetters anything to do with it? Impediments to communication?

Recently, I begged a gentleman not to talk to me while I was writing a prescription for him. He continued talking. Afterwards, it was found that some trifling circumstance in the directions was omitted, and he told me of it; I reminded him that I had requested him not to talk while I was writing. He thought I had told him that I had the faculty of writing prescriptions correctly, notwithstanding people talked to me at the time, and that it made no difference.—I lately found a prescription for powders of calomel executed in pills; an article much more difficult for a child, the patient, to take; on examination, "*pulveres*" was found written as plainly as it was possible for me to write it, and in a better hand than I commonly execute; but I was told that I "*ought*," instead of "*fiant pulveres*," to have written "*divide in chartas*." With great ceremony, then, and with a very serious request that it should take place at an interview apart, I was warned of a dereliction of my own. I insisted on the presence of a member of the family. The error turned out to be that I had written *glycerine*, a word of entirely modern composition, with *rrhi* instead of *ri*; and this would, in the absence of the superior, have induced the

attendant at the counter to put up liquorice; dried liquorice, in masses, with directions written below to syringe the nostrils with it!—A dose or two of calomel failed of the effect desired. The apothecary had divided two grains, for a child, into twelve powders, when it was written undeniably three. Why? Because that was Dr. Such-a-one's usual method of administering it. It had been taught as Dr. Ayre's practice. Dr. Ayre directs the exact contrary.

These require no refutation. Except sending future prescriptions to shops where common sense is practised, they might only be met with ridicule. The list could easily be enlarged; but the best finale which I can make to it seems to me to be a reference to a letter from an apothecary in Pittsburg, who is a graduate in medicine, and honorably subscribes his name, in the last number of the *Reporter* of this city, in which he favors the medical profession with a whole column of advice as to their conduct to apothecaries; and informs physicians that compliance would, he believes, obviate the great majority of druggists' mistakes. Why did the doctor, who has reflected so well, and has so sound a judgment, leave the profession he could have benefitted, and become an apothecary? The doctor's second recommendation, out of nine, is that we should make our prescriptions *pay* [his own italics]. We should make them in big and profitable mixtures. In this, he says, we have unlimited power. Our doing so would induce men to spend time, money, and labor, in qualifying themselves for the business, and would engage in it a greater number of competent and educated men. A development, new to us, of the power of the "dollar."

But we are entitled to draw from these stories a matter for consideration, very grave and important. Two principles, both of them praiseworthy, have been in action at the same time, in this business. One of them, felt as liberal, and as open to the improvements of the age, is that all apothecaries, of reasonable qualifications, should be allowed a fair and equal chance; and that it is worse than absurd to pass by a respectable store, and go to a distance, to get what the near and meritorious man will furnish equally well. The other is, that a physician should be familiar with all the apothecaries' shops to which he sends for drugs, in order to judge of the qualities and often very different strength of the articles which he directs to be procured, to avoid ambiguities, and to be sure that such errors as we have described may not be committed, but the intention of the prescriber be carried out, and



even that time, and confidence too, may not be lost. This was the custom, during the last age, of two of the largest and most confided in of our practitioners. They conditioned that all their prescriptions should be sent to the establishments which they respectively selected; and for this they were often blamed.

On these ideas, so well worthy of reflection on the part of members of the Society, we shall not now attempt to decide. We would, however, suggest the following questions. Can a physician, with a safe conscience, recommend an apothecary's establishment, of the contents and management of which he has no knowledge, merely on the ground that the master of it is a man of personal worth, and has acquitted himself creditably of a course of pharmaceutical studies? Can a shop in which fancy articles, and others of general trade, are sold, be conducted so well as one devoted exclusively to pharmacy? Is not the putting up of prescriptions quite sufficient occupation for one establishment? Is it not a sufficient profession to last a man his lifetime; and can he convert it into a wholesale business without causing a wrong? Ought levity and interruption to be tolerated at such a place? Ought any young man to be allowed to put up drugs, if he require a particular selection of pharmaceutical words to avoid ridiculous and sometimes dangerous mistakes? Has he any right to stipulate for the length of the directions? Ought so much inattention to be tolerated, as to forget the paper before his eyes, and put up the prescription from memory? Is medical prescription-writing a matter of course, and obliged to follow the formulas and habits of particular physicians? Can a city like Philadelphia support, for pharmacy alone, more than a limited number of apothecaries' stores? Is it not easier to inspect a limited number of establishments than a larger one? Is there not a tendency in all settled countries to crowd all the professions? Does not medicine now suffer from it in these States? And is there any power which can guaranty the profession of the apothecary from undergoing the same fate? Is it in the power of a government to prevent this? Is there any power in or claim against the medical profession to guaranty the pharmaceutical connection against it? Is it not, in fact, a part of the lot of man, and inevitable? In a duty important to life, health, and the peace of families, is it not right to give employment, in preference, to those who understand their business well, and discharge it with attention and care; not allowing their performance of it to



be interrupted by levity and talk? In fine, is a physician to blame who makes himself acquainted with a particular establishment, and makes it a condition with his patients that his prescriptions should be put up there?

As to the practice of taking a pecuniary premium on formulas sent to a particular shop, we have no comment to offer. A physician's character ought to be above such imputations; and so, in fact, ought an apothecary's.

The hegira of a number of medical students from Philadelphia institutions to those of Southern States, on motives connected with national discussions, has made much sensation among us. The County Medical Society, however, has but little interest in the matter. These students are not Philadelphians; and this society is not connected with any school, North or South, except its own lectures and discussions. As members of the same profession, we may regret it, both for disturbing the study of medicine with politics, a neutral mixture not at all to be recommended, and because it is to be apprehended that the course of instruction, which we believe to be less complete than it should be, will suffer further loss by this exchange of cities, and by their making it so suddenly.

Having thus run over rapidly, but at somewhat inconvenient length, those among the events of the year which we thought would interest the County Society, is it practicable to end with a summing up? Can we, in the words of the philosophic king, "hear the conclusion of the whole matter?" It would be unbecoming to go into the common places of a life of virtue and honor; often, like some other things, most talked about by those who are not quite proportionably strict in adhering to it. We will spare you this, gentlemen, although we have touched upon some of the reasoning connected with it: we are not volunteer clergymen, but practitioners of medicine.

Let us never speak slightly of the profession, nor of members of it. Let us avoid rivalry. Let us avoid the affectation of liberality, and adhere closely to rigid truth. Let us never give way to dictation. Let us recollect that real science, if conducted becomingly, will serve as well to influence the popular mind as imposture; and that, in fact, imposture always tries to imitate it. Let us avoid mixing medicine with collateral science; or with politics; or with speculations in building or commerce. Let us, in fine, bestow upon medicine the same labor that others bestow upon

collateral objects, and we shall probably prosper; but, if we do not, the blessing of Almighty God will not be withheld from us. There are other treasures than money, and treasures that money will never buy.

Allow me, then, in taking leave of you, to make an unfeigned acknowledgment of gratitude for your flattering kindness; and to assure you that, though mixed with much care, and some anxiety, the tasks which you have laid upon me have been the source of great and highly valued pleasure; and that I have sincerely labored to discharge my duty. Finally, I feel that I cannot do better than close with the lines of Juvenal, at the end of the tenth satire.

Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano;  
 Fortem posce animum et mortis terrore carentem;  
 Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponat  
 Naturæ; qui ferre queat quoscumque labores,  
 Nesciat irasci, cupiat nihil, et potiores  
 Herculis ærumnas credat sævosque labores,  
 Et venere et cœnis, et plumis Sardanapali.  
 Monstro quod ipse tibi possis dare. Semita certè  
 Tranquillæ per virtutem patet unica vitæ.  
 Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia. Nos te,  
 Nos facimus, Fortuna, deam cœloque locamus.

Let us pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body; for a strong spirit, free from the terror of death; which may view the termination of life as one of the duties of nature; which may endure any labors; may know not to be angry, long for nothing, and prefer the hardships and toils of Hercules to the dissipation, feasts, and plumes of Sardanapalus. I point out what thou canst give thyself. Certainly, the only path of a quiet life is by virtue. No favor of the gods is absent, if we have prudence. We, we, O Fortune, make thee a goddess, and place thee in the skies.